



## Application of the Natural History Museum of the Lesvos Petrified Forest for cooperation at the Erasmus program

### **THE PETRIFIED FOREST OF THE LESVOS – A PROTECTED NATURAL MONUMENT**

On the western part of Lesvos Island, remains of fossil plants appear within volcanic rocks. The fossils comprise the well-known «Lesvos Petrified Forest», which covers an area of 15,000 ha. Within this area, several unique palaeobotanical sites showing high concentrations of fossilised tree-trunks have been discovered.

The region of the Petrified Forest is characterized by impressive volcanic geotopes, result of the intense volcanic activity of the past. This region could be characterized as a window on the geohistoric development of the Aegean over the past 20 million years.

Scientists researching and studying the Petrified Forest speak enthusiastically of the rarity and great scientific value of the monument and repeatedly emphasize the uniqueness of the site.

The Petrified Forest constitutes an entire forest ecosystem that was fossilised on the spot because of intense volcanic activity. The large number of fossilised trunks that have remained standing upright, with their root system fully developed, confirms that the trees were fossilised in their original position, thus this is an autochthonous fossilised forest.

The fossilised trees and the parts of the plants have been preserved in excellent conditions up to the present. The age of the forest and the great variety of fossilised plant species that have been found contribute to its great scientific value, whereas the composition of the fossilised flora is a particularly important guide to the climatic conditions, the environment and the geological conditions at that period.

At the Petrified Forest, we can gather information regarding the plant species which constituted the island's flora, findings of the oldest known land mammal in Greece, *Prodeinotherium bavaricum*, the climatic and geological conditions that prevailed in the Aegean area 20 million years ago. In other words, the Petrified Forest constitutes a unique "testimonial" of the geological history of the Aegean basin over the past 20 million years.

## **NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF THE LESVOS PETRIFIED FOREST - GENERAL DESCRIPTION**

The Natural History Museum of the Lesvos Petrified Forest is a legal entity established in 1994 for the benefit of the public, under the supervision of the Greek Ministry of Culture & Tourism. The Museum's objective is to study, research, promote, preserve and conserve the unique Petrified Forest of Lesvos, a designated Protected Natural Monument of particular environmental, geological and paleontological value.

The main activities of the Natural History Museum of the Lesvos Petrified Forest are towards the protection, conservation and promotion of the geological heritage and natural environment. Parallel to this the Museum hosts exhibitions, organizes several cultural events, and is strongly involved in the sustainable development of Western Lesvos. Since 1996 the Museum conducts educational programs in co-operation with schools and Universities from Greece and European countries.

Every year the Museum collaborates with the universities and institutes in carrying out student practice programs.

The Museum has experience in participating and coordinating Greek and European projects, programs and networks. In 2004 UNESCO included the Lesvos Petrified Forest Geopark in the UNESCO Global Geoparks Network. As a member of the European Geoparks Network and the Global Geoparks Network of UNESCO the Lesvos Petrified Forest collaborates closely with other Geoparks in the world in terms of personnel exchange, know how transfer and exchange of exhibitions.

The Museum won the Eurosite Management Award for the year 2001, as a recognition, encouragement and reward to best considered practices in managing natural sites. In 2006 won the Skäl International Award and in 2009 the protected area of the Petrified Forest is the European Tourist Destination of Excellence for Greece – EDEN.

<b>INFORMATION</b>	
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